

Welch calls on Wal-Mart to relocate store proposed for Civil War battlefield

February 25, 2009

Rep. Peter Welch called on Wal-Mart Wednesday to reconsider its plan to build a super store next to a Civil War battleground where Vermont troops bravely held back the Confederate Army.

In a letter to Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott, Welch and Rep. Ted Poe (R-Texas) expressed their "profound disappointment" in the company's plan to erect a store next to the Spotsylvania, Virginia, site of the decisive Battle of the Wilderness.

"While we may represent different political parties and states on opposing sides of the Civil War, we stand united in our support of respecting hallowed ground such as The Wilderness battlefield," Welch and Poe wrote.

The Congressmen join a growing call for Virginia local officials to oppose the Wal-Mart, which would be built in close proximity to a monument donated by the state of Vermont recognizing the contribution and sacrifice of the 1st Vermont Brigade. Earlier this month the Vermont General Assembly passed a joint resolution calling for Wal-Mart to relocate the planned store.

"The 1st Vermont Brigade's brave stand at the Battle of the Wilderness exemplifies the spirit and sacrifice of Vermont troops in all conflicts our country has faced. This hallowed ground must be protected and preserved so that future generations of Vermonters can appreciate our state's crucial role in saving the Union," Welch said.

The letter is copied below:

February 25, 2009

Lee Scott

President and Chief Executive Officer

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Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

702 SW 8th Street

Bentonville, AR 72716-8611

Dear Mr. Scott:

We write to you with profound disappointment in your company's decision to locate a new store near The Wilderness battlefield in Virginia and urge your immediate reconsideration.

While we may represent different political parties and states on opposing sides of the Civil War, we stand united in our support of respecting hallowed ground such as The Wilderness battlefield. The Wilderness, as well as other battlegrounds throughout the United States, represents the great struggles and sacrifices our soldiers made to defend freedoms they cherished deeply enough to risk their lives. Four thousand men on both sides died and twenty thousand were wounded during this battle in the spring of 1864. These lands and lands near them should always be spared from commercial development. Further, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, formed by Congress to protect the historical significance of our nation's Civil War sites, has defined your proposed land for development as part of The Wilderness battlefield.

There are countless other locations your company could consider for a more responsibly sited development in this region. We feel the definition of corporate responsibility must always extend to respecting storied lands and respecting a community's natural landscape and surroundings when choosing a site for a store. Those values should not be eroded for the sake of commercial gain.

We urge you to listen to feedback you've received from groups close to The Wilderness battlefield and others who care deeply about keeping this nation's history and lands preserved and look elsewhere for development. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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Ted Poe Peter Welch

Member of Congress Member of Congress

Texas Vermont